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ABSTRACT

An instructor's teaching practices have been influenced by Edward T. Hall's theory in "Beyond Culture," which begins with the notion that "what is known least well and is therefore in the poorest position to be studied is what is closest to oneself," the "unconscious patterns that control us." This wisdom has been useful in planning introductory writing courses using materials on cultural autobiography and anthropology, and recently, in planning a literature-based writing course. The focus was on fiction in which characters encountered new experiences on foreign soil (a cross-cultural initiation when values or beliefs of the new place clash with those of the home setting). Among the books chosen were Isak Dinesen's "Babette's Feast" and Henry James's "The Ambassadors." Students were required to keep journals, in which they recorded their own responses to the literature, and to write a research paper. During class time, students conversed about their journal entries or responded in the margins of each other's journals; they also discussed "lead" questions which modeled a way of making connections between the readings. Meetings ended with students submitting weekly journal entries that could be used in preparing a class ditto for the following week. This ditto would contain excerpts for discussion from student journals. Extensive examples of student writing show the range of sophisticated responses reflecting on issues of cultural literacy and criticism. (Contains 23 references.) (TB)

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ISSUES IN CROSS CULTURAL TEACHING: EDUCATING THE IMAGINATION WITH CROSS CULTURAL APPROACHES TO LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

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ISSUES IN CROSS CULTURAL TEACHING

EDUCATING THE IMAGINATION WITH CROSS CULTURAL

APPROACHES TO LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Whether the reading component of the writing class is text-based literature or the student's own writing is often a concern of those teaching introductory composition classes. My own pedagogical preference has been to combine readings in anthropology and literature with a writing text, not to indoctrinate students in any particular ideology but to invite them to examine different ways of perceiving their own cultural (and multicultural) context. I introduce Edward Hall's anthropological essays alongside cross cultural autobiographies as the stimulus for exploratory thought, talk, and writing of expository essays and general research papers. As students read about generational conflicts, gender roles, and cultural differences in books by writers like Alice Walker, Maxine Hong Kingston, Richard Wright, Leslie Lame Deer, and Mark Mathabane, they write about similar issues arising in their own social and cultural contexts.

My teaching practices have been influenced largely by Hall's theory, expressed in Beyond Culture, that a cross cultural perspective begins "with the notion that what is known least well and is therefore in the poorest position to be studied is what is closest to oneself," the "unconscious patterns that control us" (45). We can only achieve awareness of our own social context "by interacting with others who do not share that system--members of the opposite sex, different age groups, different ethnic groups, and different cultures" (44). And what better place to go to find these "others," I feel, than literature in which an author's

vision is grounded in a confluence of cultures and in the subsequent insights rising out of the author's cultural crossing?

Student interest in a cross cultural approach caused me one semester to adopt a similar focus for the last of three courses in a sequence of introductory composition classes for undergraduates of all majors. In this course, students were required to read imaginative literature and to write two literary research papers. But the unwieldy class size of 45 students did not bode well for activities leading up to literature-based, response-centered research: small group sharing, exploratory writing activities and teacher-student interchange. So I soon began wondering if I should surrender to a traditional literature survey format (lectures and tests) as several of my colleagues had done. I decided to continue with a literature-intensive writing class, all the while wondering how I could make it workable.

I wanted to keep the course similar to the two previous classes of the sequence, with journal entries and research studies emerging from the cross cultural readings, although I knew I would be substituting fiction for autobiography. Focusing on fiction, however, was soon providing me with an interesting research question of my own. With the previous courses of the sequence, I noticed that Alice Walker's essays, set in present day America and asserting strong ethnic and feminist attitudes, often caused white students to become hostile and defensive and Black students to remain silent in discussions. At the same time, Richard Wright's Black Boy, set in an earlier time, and Mark Mathabane's Kaffir Boy, set in a distant place, caused so such problems. Furthermore, Kingston's story, "No Name Woman," from The Woman Warrior, set in a distant time and place, and reading so much like fiction, had generated lively discussion and ideas for writing. Could literature set in a

distant--or imaginary--place or time help students journey even more deeply into cultural diversity?

I decided to investigate fiction in which characters encountered new experiences on foreign soil (or a cross cultural initiation when values or beliefs of the new place clashed with those of the "home" setting). I chose stories which fitted Oscar Cargill's definition of "international" fiction. Here according to Cargill, "a character, usually guided in his [or her] actions by the mores of one environment, is set down in another, where his [or her] learned reflexes are of no use to him, where he must employ all his individual resources to meet successive situations, and where he must intelligently accommodate himself to the new mores, or, in one way or another, be destroyed" (419).

Cargill sees international fiction as "the novelist's equivalent of . . . a laboratory for studying the behavior of an organism, only here it is a device for the revelation of character" (419). And it seemed to me that this particular type of fiction might be important for students in late adolescence and early adulthood, so uneasy at times with the differences of others, especially if they could begin exploring--and experiencing--diversity in more responsive and critical ways, since according to Gerald Graff, "We need to teach not just texts themselves but how we situate ourselves in reference to those texts" (262).

One way we situate ourselves in relation to literature is through a cross cultural lens in which lines of age, class, gender, ethnicity, and nationality intersect (if such literature is discoverable for them), but in which spaces of time, place, and actual fact can be kept, for the moment, at a "safe" distance. The lens must, however, not be the usual politically "correct" one that merely promotes notions of social tolerance or even cultural "equity." As

Clifford Geertz has noted, "To see others as sharing a nature with ourselves is the merest decency . . . It is for the far more difficult achievement of seeing ourselves amongst others . . . that the largeness of mind, without which objectivity is self congratulation and tolerance a sham, comes" (16).

TEACHER PLANNING

I decided to begin with Isak Dinesen's Babette's Feast, an accessible novel with cultural contrasts emerging between late nineteenth century French and Danish characters, so that students could see at the outset general qualities of international fiction demonstrated implicitly within the context of the story. This story (and each succeeding one) could therefore serve to establish, indirectly, a great deal about the international "genre," since this was not to be a course in literature generally or in the international novel or cross cultural literature specifically, but one designed to promote exploration of cultural diversity through talk and writing, in response to this particular type of literature.

Students would read Northrop Frye's The Educated Imagination alongside Babette's Feast, as a supporting critical structure for that story (as well as for the fiction following it), and in class discussions they would begin making connections between the fiction and non fiction. Frye's theory that writers imagine the worlds in which they wish to live and that they create visions of society that provide "standards and values we need if we are to do anything better than adjust" (66), provided a clear rationale for studying literature through a cross cultural lens. His stated reason for studying literature generally (its encouragement of tolerance) provided additional support for utilizing cross cultural, international stories.

For the next portion of the course, I selected Alison Lurie's Foreign Affairs, a modern international novel, and James's The Ambassadors, a far less accessible book but a prototypical example of the international "form" (and a book many aspects of which are echoed--and parodied--by Lurie's, set in the same time period as Babette's Feast. And both novels would be read alongside E. M. Forster's Aspects of the Novel. Forster's book included a discussion of The Ambassadors; it also served to introduce students to the craft of fiction. For the last part of the course, I selected international short stories by writers such as Saul Bellow and James Baldwin to be read alongside Hall's Beyond Culture, as well as several essays from Hall's The Dance of Life and The Hidden Dimension, so that students might begin connecting as many of Hall's theories as possible to all the fiction of the course.

Literature was only half the story however. I wanted writing to function as an exploratory learning tool for uncovering the imagined personal and social worlds of these authors, as well as for stimulating the critical and cultural reflections of the students. So I included, as part of the course requirements, the students' regular and frequent entries in a reading response journal. To introduce this requirement, I wrote the same notation in the syllabus that I included for all of my classes:

> You will keep a journal in which you write your responses to the material you are reading, and you will share your responses in class and write more at that time, as you share your reactions with others and as you respond to their reactions with talk and writing. Consider the following questions as you begin. (Note: all of these questions might not work for you each time you read or

write anything; simply use them as guidelines if you need them.)

1. What did you read?
2. What did you see or think about as you read?
3. Did what you read cause you to imagine something? Wonder about something? Remember something? Question or resist something?
4. What ideas or feelings emerged for you as you were reading?
5. What connections did you make to something outside the text?
6. What did you discover that others thought about the story?
7. How have others' experiences with the text added to you own ideas?
8. How have their ideas changed yours? Or have they?
9. What is happening as you read in this class? Are you learning anything about how you read? Are your reading patterns changing?

Students were also asked to produce a research paper (the journal would count as half of the research writing component or as the equivalent of one paper), with topics emerging from texts, issues raised in the journals, or class discussions about texts and journal entries. The paper took on the status of a "project," since students were being asked not only to share papers in small groups along the way, but also to write commentaries for classmates concerning what they found most memorable about the research, after hearing final drafts of classmates. They would also write metastories of their own papers (descriptions of how their research topics emerged for them, how their papers took shape and developed, and what they learned in the process of writing their papers).

The four objectives for the course were related to both the reading and writing

requirements and the class talk. Students would read, write about, and discuss literature in a social setting and would begin to view literature as a source of illumination and expansion of their thinking and the thinking of others. They would examine international fiction in particular, in order to discover the major preoccupations of people of different cultural settings in different eras. They would read both fiction and nonfictional "texts" in order to construct theories about effective (or ineffective) writing styles. They would serve as partners in research with others and as reflective "lenses" for the ideas of others, and they would attempt to challenge themselves as often as possible to strengthen their capabilities as learners generally and as readers and writers specifically. Literature selections and student writing would bolster each objective. In addition, Frye's book would be particularly supportive for the first; Hall's essays would have close ties to the second; and Forster's work would be helpful in relation to the third.

ROUTINE CLASSROOM EVENTS: THE DIALOGUE CHAINING 'DITTO'

The class began with book browsing and initial responses to the literature. Subsequent meetings proceeded, as in the previous composition classes of the sequence, with students in small groups sharing journal entries composed outside class. They either conversed about their entries or responded in the margins of one another's journals. Often they discussed "lead" questions that I posed in order to model a way of making connections between the readings, and they added to their journals, as the session progressed with all-group discussions following the smaller group talk. Meetings ended with students submitting weekly journal entries that I could utilize in preparing a class ditto for the following week.

(In this class, we were meeting once each week as a three hour night class.) The ditto was especially useful with such a large class, since responding to fifty journals each week would have been quite time consuming.

To prepare the class ditto, I extracted from the individual journal entries those comments that I thought would stimulate dialogic classroom conversation about the readings. Thus members of one small group could hear and react to comments made in other groups, and I could enter into the dialogue myself (with bracketed passages on the sheet) if I wished to deepen and widen the discussion. Each small group received one ditto sheet, and the group members responded with talk and writing. Then as a total class, we discussed what had emerged in small groups. Finally as students talked and wrote more in small groups, I reflected back on the large group discussion, jotting ideas for "lead" questions to place on the next ditto.

One ditto emerging from an early session of this class appeared as follows:

Lead Questions From Last Meeting

Frye says that the scientist decides, "I don't like this. I'll improve on it." The artist says, "This is not the way I would have imagined." Do the characters in Babette's feast act as we would act in similar circumstances (given a similar upbringing and culture)? Are they logical within the confines of their circumstances? Or is Babette an idealized character too good to be true)? And how does setting contribute to behavior here, or does it? (Could this story have been set in another place just as well?)

Responses to Lead Questions

1. It made us think of what it would be like to live at that time. People were so obedient with extremely high morals.

2. I was wondering why the two sisters obeyed their father's rules even when he wasn't around.

3. Most members of our group were confused and puzzled about the meaning of Babette's Feast. I'm still not sure whose destiny the story is about.

4. We thought it meant that sometimes when you're kind, people take advantage, so be careful. Babette had always thought not of herself, but of everyone else.

[Question: Was Babette totally altruistic or was the dinner something for herself as well?]

5. I think this story showed how important a person's heritage is to them. Babette's luxurious dinner was more important to her than 10 francs. She felt she was a very wealthy woman just because she could express her artistic talents through a French dinner set around her familiar cultural ways.

6. We want to connect Babette's Feast and Frye's book to think of Babette as arriving on a desert island and as going through the stages Frye's shipwrecked person did.

7. Neither Martine's nor Phillipa's love relationships worked out, yet they seemed accepting of their fate. It was not a happy ending.

[Question: What would have made it a happy ending for you?]

8. The ending of this story portrayed a very important meaning. I think people are very shallow and unwilling to accept things that deviate from the norm in their culture. However Babette was given a chance to cross cultures with her Puritan mistresses and the result

benefitted both her and the two sisters. It was ironic how something so good was feared.

I chose responses for the ditto if they revealed (or evaded) various ways of connecting the books (response 6), if they revealed ways of focusing on cross cultural aspects of the books (responses 2, 7, 8), and if they "spoke" to one another intertextually to signal opposing viewpoints (responses 7-8 and 4-5). The ditto here functioned as it did for me in any of my composition classes, enabling me to keep discussions focused on the general topic of the classes (cross cultural learning) and to keep the flow of conversation going. At the same time in this particular class, it enabled me to teach indirectly elements of fiction such as thematic emphasis, character delineation, character motivation, and the importance of setting. And it kept this particularly large class aware of unresolved issues in the various small groups, and it uncovered special concerns that were emerging at the same time in more than one group.

One concern that continued to merit attention for several weeks was the class reaction to James's novel The Ambassadors. The students, having just finished Lurie's book as they approached James's, were both challenged and frustrated by James's stylistic complexity. The ditto, or what I eventually came to think of as a dialogue-chaining class "response," enabled them to vent feelings of hostility and to express puzzlement and confusion. (Should they feel apologetic for not being better able to understand James's novel or feel insulted by having been subjected to such an incomprehensible style?) It also enabled them to sort out just what was troubling them about James and to compare notes with others across the wider classroom community. Since students were given several class meetings to read the longer

fiction, and some were finishing the book at different times than others, the ditto was especially useful. Week by week, the unfolding conversation on the sheet enabled them to enter the dialogue at their own pace when the need arose and still be a functioning participant at each meeting.

EXPLORATORY WRITING AND RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

The long-term interchange about James's style began the first week that his novel was assigned. One student responding in her journal said, "I found James's style nerve-wracking and incomprehensible in contrast to Lurie's. Perhaps a good book is one which has a style that is in agreement with that of the reader."

Another student wrote "Characters [in The Ambassadors] are not introduced with any kind of background information for easier understanding. I found myself questioning what I was reading, how a certain character fitted in, where and when the action was taking place. Too many questions, very few answers. Even the dialogue was confusing at times. Is Maria Gostrey a prostitute? Nevertheless what I think so far is that Strether has been sent to Paris by Mrs. Newsome, a wealthy New England widow, to bring her son Chad back to America."

A third student wrote, "While in London, Strether meets a young woman, Maria Gostrey, and the two seem to hit it off immediately. I think this scares Strether. This could be the start of a love triangle between Strether, Maria, and Mrs. Newsome." And a fourth stated, "I like Maria. She seems to take control of things--always like she knows exactly what she's doing. Has she experienced these things before or does she think she knows

everything."

With these four journal entries, two different types of response to the book were emerging. Or perhaps in terms of Rosenblatt's terminology, students were producing two different "transactions" with text--or two different "stances" of the transaction. "The concept of stance or focus of attention," says Rosenblatt, "leads the reader to select from a broader or narrower range of the elements of consciousness activated in transaction with the text" (40).

The first two students were at this point "blocked" from what Rosenblatt describes as an "aesthetic" stance or a "lived-through evocation" of the work, whereby "ideas, sensations, feelings, and images" were drawn from "past linguistic, literary, and life experience" and organized or synthesized "into a new experience, the evocation" (40). As they speculated about their responses ("perhaps a good book is one which . . ."; "Is Maria Gostrey a prostitute? Nevertheless what I think so far . . . . . "), they took on an "efferent" stance, in which as Rosenblatt says, "the readers' selective attention during the reading is focused mainly on the public referents of the words, on the ideas being developed for retention after the reading" (40).

In other words they moved into summarizing the plot, categorizing characters, and analyzing style, in order to extract from the text some way of dealing with it, just the opposite of what a professional critic might do (live through the evoked experience of the story, then attempt to extract some efferent "meaning" from it in numerous, additional readings). And it may be that the efferent stance is the initial one that less experienced readers cultivate because of the way they are often taught in short answer testing situations.

Or the efferent stance may be what some students take in order to situate themselves more comfortably in the text (a necessary "stage" before the lived-through experience can begin to emerge), especially if the writer's style or the socio-cultural facts of the author's milieu present too great a contrast with (or distance from) the reader's own experience. (Moving from James Bond too quickly into Henry James, as one student suggested, might very well result in severe literary shock.)

At the same time for the third and fourth students, the efferent and aesthetic stances were working in tandem smoothly from the start. Both of these readers had moved quickly into an emotional evocation or experience as they responded to the mood and momentum of the story. And seeing these responses on the dittos interfaced with those students who were having difficulty situating themselves in the story provided the students with more interpretative options. Maria seen as confident and cosmopolitan rather than as a prostitute; Strether seen as intrigued by Maria as well as frightened by her.

What was equally important, however, was that as students saw and heard one another engaging in both efferent and aesthetic transactions, they could begin to understand better both what Rosenblatt has described as the process of reading itself: "an event involving a particular reader, a particular text, at a particular time, under particular circumstances" (40). And in this case, reading provided a way for readers in a particular classroom form a particular interpretive community, a "crossing" of cultures in itself, as Ray noted in his journal entry during that session: "While sitting here, I can't believe how many different thoughts can come out of a single reading. You can often learn a lot about people, their personality and the mood they were in while reading a book, through their interpretation of

the reading."

I placed Ray's response on the next class ditto thinking that reading it might cause the others to feel less constraint in voicing their own particular interpretations. Beyond this, I thought some students might begin building theories about their own responses to James's style. And for the weekly ditto that followed his remarks, Terry's comment appeared first: "Many readers are accusing themselves of poor reading comprehension because of the style of writing. What I don't understand is whether the story is typical of how books were written in the early 1900s?"

Phil's response came next: "I wish that this story was condensed a little. Most of it was descriptive in every little detail. I feel the reader should have some space to imagine. Perhaps James Bond books are not detailed, but they fulfill what Frye was getting across in The Educated Imagination. Then came Don's: "I think this is an interesting example of how readers have gotten used to conventional writing. We want James to follow the formula we are used to and that will make us comfortable. But hey, we can't always get what we want. James doesn't have that popular fiction formula." Finally there was Trey's: "I really don't understand what part Maria Gostrey plays in the story. Not all things in a novel can be understood by one person at one sitting. We all need to compare notes."

As students talked and wrote in different small groups, they were able to see more of the wider classroom "culture," as well as, at times, to initiate their own "local" questions for the next session: Popular fiction versus the classics: Which one provides more "space to imagine"? At other times students writing back and forth to one another in the same group, for their in-class journal entries, produced their own interfacings of "twinned responses" for

the next ditto (and it is at this point in any class that I begin using student names on the sheet, since there is no other way to replicate the close dialogic nature of such an interchange):

> 1. I'm not quite sure what it is about Marie de Vionnet that everyone finds so wonderful. Henry James doesn't really explain that remark. (Judy) 2. If Mrs. Newsome could represent Woollett, why then couldn't Marie represent Paris? If Marie is the charm and grace of Paris, then it only follows that those who know her would love her. She is cultured, refined, she offers freedom. (Ann)

The next week, Kathy and Ray, reading Ann's and Judy's remarks on the ditto and responding to one another's journal entries in their own group, produced another "twinned" response about the definition of "freedom" and the way it shifted from character to character in James's novel (Kathy) and the ensuing question, "Is anyone [in the novel] really free? If so, who?" (Ray). The following week my "lead" question ("What does freedom mean, by American versus European standards, in the book?) was designed to help all of the students build on the dialogic discourse. Ann began examining in greater detail the differences in Paris and Woollett. Kathy concluded that freedom was a matter of political rights in one culture (America) versus social feelings in the other, an idea that Dorothy would remember and cite later in her research paper in order to refute it.

EXPLORATORY WRITING AND RESEARCH PROJECTS

The subject of "freedom," just taking root at this point in talk and writing, was to emerge as the central focus in several of the papers that students produced at the end of the course, after they read the shorter fiction and Hall's Beyond Culture. Judy eventually incorporated theories of Forster, Frye, and Hall to develop "Wonderful Marie," a study she wrote to answer her original journal question, "What makes Marie so wonderful in everyone's eyes?"

Ann tested one of Hall's theories, that of cultures being basically polychronic or monochronic in their conceptions of time, against James's concept of freedom in The Ambassadors. And she concluded that James was as culture bound with his harsh judgement of Mrs. Newsome as this character was harsh in her treatment of Strether, since "Mrs. Newsome could not have acted in a manner that was any different and still have represented a monochronic time-oriented society. She has limitations and shortcomings and these are evident when she fails to take into account that Strether is in awe at the openness of the European way of life or the positive effects that Marie has performed in Chad's life. James judges her far too harshly. The very freedom he promotes so strongly in his book--the freedom to choose to be--he denies to this character."

Dorothy wrote a paper entitled simply "Freedom," in which she compared her favorite characters in Foreign Affairs with what she considered to be "similar" characters in other books, in order to refine her definition of the word "freedom." Utilizing peer responses from the class time as additional points of view against which to react, she built a thesis about the meaning of freedom in cross cultural terms. Her intent, as she stated in her first

paragraph, was "to base this paper on the past journal entries I've written since several of them discussed the idea of freedom in one way or another. In addition I will include my classmates' ideas from the Responses to Questions [the weekly class ditto] and compare their ideas to mine."

The value for Dorothy of using both her journal writing and the class ditto as springboard for her paper was that she utilized her exploratory journal writing in a practical way (it was not just a preliminary warm up for the learning process nor a separate type of writing labeled "personal" or "expressive"). And because the journals had been operating as another class text, she had the option of choosing a different writing path, one that reflected both a shaping pattern similar to the reading journal and that also led to using her peers as references, when excerpts of their journals appeared in the weekly ditto and she utilized data from the dittos for her research.

Ted also utilized peer responses to literature--but in a slightly different way. He conducted his research on the topic of the "mysterious" Jamesian style that he and his classmates had discovered. Utilizing an essay in the Forster text that discussed H. G. Wells's negative attitude toward James's style as his starting place, Ted read other sources to discover more about the views each author had expressed about the other's work, as reflected in the letters they had exchanged (parts of which he included in his paper). Then he focused on the way each writer was misunderstood in his own day.

For students who had invested a great deal of time attempting to understand James's style, it was a welcome relief to discover that a contemporary of James had experienced the same difficulty that they had. And they voted Ted's paper the most interesting one in the

class. "It wasn't our fault," they seemed to be sighing as they listened to him read his paper. Or as Ray wrote to Ted in his peer response: "It wasn't the time period. It was James's style—then or now."

Also because the students had been from the beginning, with the cross cultural emphasis, immersed in what Belenky has described as "connected knowing," or the attempt to understand others based on empathetic sharing of their experiences or ways of thinking (115), reactions also focused on relational, as well as individual, concerns. Commenting on why she awarded Ted's paper "Most Memorable," Dorothy wrote, "I thought it was interesting that they [James and Wells] were friends and still criticized each other's work. I would imagine that was a difficult relationship to maintain. Perhaps the relationship actually aided in both their works. After all, criticism by another established author would increase the desire to excel."

Whether or not students utilized peer journal responses as entry point or as part of the supporting data for a major premise of their papers, they discovered more ways of situating themselves aesthetically, in Rosenblatt's terms, in relation to the literature they were studying. And the "ways" of taking on literature in turn reflected that they were beginning to see more clearly their own cultural values as they observed characters in cross cultural situations and then explored their responses in talk and writing.

CROSS CULTURAL LITERACY AND CULTURAL LEARNING

Class members began reading a new piece of fiction by stepping into the shoes of a person who had been set down in a different cultural setting, a character who was often in a

particular place as an unwelcome guest and was thus in cultural conflict as a result of this geophysical displacement. And often students were as confused as the character was in this new situation, with bewilderment serving as a useful entry into the "lived-through" experience of the story.

As students began sharing their feelings of disequilibrium in talk and writing, as they shared journal entries in small groups and responded to the class diets of the week, they also began to journey beyond their initial confusions and to move from efferent into aesthetic stances--or to move more deeply into an aesthetic stance. Then as the class progressed, they began to identify their own cultural values through empathy (or antipathy toward) the characters they were beginning to understand. Hall's book, read alongside the short fiction, was especially helpful in providing a more technical language with which to discuss the feelings students were forming about characters and their cultural behavior.

As Margaret said of Saul Bellow's "The Gonzaga Manuscripts": "In Clarence's eyes, Spain was a 'hidden culture,' as Hall mentions. Clarence often misinterpreted the Spanish people. Although these Spanish natives were open with Clarence, he still kept the Spanish cultural heritage hidden behind his American ideas. I was left with a pathetic feeling about Clarence. It almost made me ashamed that he somewhat represented American culture."

Understanding better a character's behavior helped students find ways to consider their own values. As Molly, speaking of a different character in this same story said, "I find this two-sided nature in a lot of people, including myself. I can imagine who I want to be [but] in many ways that imagined person is not who I actually am. If there is one positive aspect of reading this story, it has given me insight to understand others from these cultures and has

even given me a chance to evaluate myself as to how I would act in similar situations."

Trey echoed the same sentiment, but it was Hall's book in its entirety that evoked his response: "Hall's last chapter shows how people come together and are separated all through life. People should accept others for what they are, but when it comes to pressuring them, one must release. He finished the book so beautifully. It made me wonder if I force my ideas on everyone and if I treat people poorly based on their culture. Although I try not to, unfortunately I see a bad side of myself sometimes, which I try to suppress. This is no excuse, but a starting place for all of us to change."

At times the literature also *enabled* students to see alternate ways of viewing their own culture--or in viewing it from a fictional perspective, they were *able* to imagine an alternative course of action to that chosen by a character. Such a resistant reader role was evident in Margaret's entry about the Bellow story (above) in which she views Clarence as less cosmopolitan than she would wish him to be. But this resistance was even more clearly developed in an entry Dee wrote about Baldwin's "This Morning, This Evening, So Soon," in which she described herself as culture-bound to a specific time and place outside the character's perspective.

This new awareness enabled her to begin questioning aspects of the dominant culture and the ensuing conflicts for those of the minority culture, or to begin resisting what she as an American had taken for granted: "I enjoyed this story and found many new points of prejudice toward blacks. This is a topic that being white I quite honestly don't think much about. But in learning other cultural differences, I now recognize its importance. I didn't even know he was black (Paul) until he talked about his sister. It's funny how you imagine

the characters as white [if you are white]. Why is it we never picture a black man as a main character?

Dee continued by linking Baldwin's story to Hall's analysis of American culture. "We [Americans] do a lot of weird things," she wrote. "Is it good that American kids are so independent? Why is intimacy broken down the older we get from our parents?" There was obvious discomfort here, not only the notion of prejudice she is examining in herself, but also about "weird" qualities in American behavior generally, customs that Baldwin was exploring, such as father-son relationships, intimacy, independence, as well as white bigotry.

Meeting stories such as these at a time in their lives when they were attempting to explore sensitive issues involving gender, class, ethnicity, age, religion, nationality, and race, these students found in their exploratory writing an opportunity to pause and reflect more critically on personal, social, and national aspects of identity. And both the imaginary aspect and the foreign setting of the cross cultural literature had an important distancing effect for students who might otherwise have felt defensive or threatened as they confronted such issues so directly in talk and writing.

I noticed students extending their range of empathy and questioning their own social and personal diversities in many ways as they moved into and through these stories, depending of course on their own personality constructs, their own preferred way of responding to literature, and on the literature itself. As Naidoo suggests in her study of racism among adolescents, the students who are already tending toward "openness," in their receptivity to authorial visions of reshaping the world, will be the ones most open to empathetic extensions, critical inquiry, self scrutiny, and reflection of their own social context, as

response to authorial visions. "Identification with a character or situation appears to lead easily to projection," she adds, "with a reader imputing values and supplying background not contained in the text. Furthermore, reading material conflicting with a reader's world view is liable to be misinterpreted, with readers being highly selective in their interpretation" (18). Thus it was quite important that they could "compare notes," as Trey said.

As Elizabeth Freund has also indicated, "the practice of supposedly impersonal and disinterested reading is never innocent and always infected by suppressed or unexamined presuppositions" (10). Still, as Nauhaus claims, "the circumstances under which the reading is done" (18) or the way we teach, can help students to see that such issues as race and by extension, culture, is a "lens through which [students] have been socialized to view themselves and others--as well as a chance of realizing that they are in a position to reshape their own lenses" (140).

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